


The question, Why do we go to war? :  
temperately discussed, according to  
the official correspondence.



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1803  
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THE

# QUESTION

WHY DO WE GO TO WAR?

TEMPERATELY DISCUSSED,

ACCORDING TO THE

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

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So shaken as we are, so wan with care,  
Find we a time for frightened peace to pant,  
And breathe short-winded accents of new broils  
To be commenced *for* strands afar remote?

HEN. IV. Part I. *Act 1. Scene 1.*

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SECOND EDITION.

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

FROM an attentive perusal of the Official Correspondence in the month of June last, the Author of the following tract could not help being forcibly struck with the insufficiency of the arguments for plunging this Country again into a desperate war, in the circumstances it was under, and after the dangers from which it had just escaped ; he saw the appearance, indeed as *he* thought the reality, of a breach of faith ; he likewise found objects held out to pursuit that could by no means warrant the immense expense of treasure and of blood they must necessarily occasion.

With the best intentions therefore, as he can safely and conscientiously avow, he gave his thoughts and decision to the public, in hopes that, by pointing out errors, and softening resentment, he might have some chance, if he could not stop the beginning, at least of checking the progress of that animosity and exasperation which seemed likely to render the contest a war of extermination.

Though written in June, from accidental circumstances, the tract did not issue from the press till towards the latter end of July. The attention of the country being drawn to one point, that of its defence, from the reiterated threats of invasion, however temperate the discussion, however calm the analysis of the Official Papers, however distinct the question of defence from the question of the causes of the war—the Pamphlet was conceived to have an injurious tendency ; and Government, if report say true, made some efforts to suppress the publication or controul the circulation of it. Whether from this overcautious proceeding, or that the effervescence of passion has subsided, and given place to cooler reasoning, what was for some time in the back ground, has lately been brought more openly into notice. The first impression is sold off, and a second edition called for ; which would not have been issued, had not two answers just now appeared under the titles of “The Reason why,” and “Observations on a Pamphlet, &c.” The first, by illiberal insinuation and incivility of language, suggesting the accusation of disloyalty, friendship to France, &c. clearly betrays the pen of the hireling ; the Author of the second has more the appearance of a volunteer in the cause, and to do him justice, seems at least a *Gentleman* Volunteer, to which character, whatever pretensions the author of “The Reason why” may have, they are not manifested by his work, particularly



ticularly the first pages of it. This second edition of the original tract, occasioned by these answers, is perhaps the best reply to them: one however more at large, chiefly to the stipendiary, but with something to the Volunteer, is preparing, and will speedily be published. With regard to any injurious effect this publication may be supposed to have on the general cause of self-defence, the author must beg leave to remark, that it was never addressed to the lower orders, or meant to be one of those stimulants distributed at so much per dozen,\* “to screw their courage to the sticking-place.” It speaks rather to the magnates of the realm, who have it in their power to seize the moment of accommodation, the instant it occurs; to shew what is the opinion of many individuals respecting the origin of the war; that they must not rely upon the unanimity of the nation as to the cause, whatever they may do, as I hope they always will be able to do, respecting the effect, the invasion of the country; to shew there have been provocations on both sides, that we should not therefore with too high and haughty a spirit, that spirit or that something which brings upon us the jealousy, I might say, the odium of almost every power in Europe, reject the first opening of conciliation; that we should not pursue objects that could in no state of our finances, but particularly in the present, be worth the enormous cost. The middle classes, and all that can reason, will readily be convinced of the necessity of uniting for general defence, and draw the obvious conclusion, that the more our enemy thinks us the aggressors and himself insulted (and I believe most moderate men will allow he is not without some provocation), the more vigorous must be our resistance; for the more shall we have to dread his vengeance and oppression on the success of his attempt. To the lower classes I would enforce this truth, that he approaches with the arm of vengeance and sword of devastation.

Should he prevail, he will spare neither the palace nor the cottage; the property of the kingdom, from the possession of the prince to the earnings of the peasant, will glut the avaricious of his crew, while the female of rank, and the poorest man's daughter, or wife, will be equally sacrificed to the appetency of the sensual, and subjected to the pollutions of the ruffian.—Such, however, are not the causes, but effects of war.

\* The Author does not mean to find fault with the popular productions of this kind, though there are some he cannot approve of; those that set forth the probable lot of the lower orders in the event of successful invasion, are highly proper and necessary: he is happy in the idea that they have had their effect, and joins his tribute of thanks to their authors.

## WHY DO WE GO TO WAR?

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AFTER a short interval of peace, a momentary repose from the calamities of a war that has desolated Europe for these eight years, in which the most ancient monarchy in it has been overturned, the smaller states reduced almost to annihilation, and the larger shaken to their foundations; a war that brought this country to the brink of a precipice, from the dangers of which we have scarcely recovered, and scarcely cease to shudder at; we find ourselves again involved in a conflict that has every appearance of being more ferocious, more inveterate than the last; of becoming, from mutual reproach and exasperation, that *bellum internecinum*, that deadly, exterminating war, at the idea of which humanity is shocked, the stoutest must tremble, the bravest be appalled: while Europe stands aghast, waiting in awful silence the issue of the dread concussion of such mighty powers; the nearer and feeble states, in anxious fear lest they should be overwhelmed and crushed in the general wreck; the larger and more remote, cherishing the secret and selfish hope, that from the ruins some valuable fragment may be wafted to their shores, and picked up for the use and ornament of their own dominions; and when we reflect on the situation of the country, the circumstances of the Bank, our prodigious debt of £500,000,000, the enormous load of taxes, the increased and increasing price of every article of life, with the occasional pressure of unfavourable seasons, it behoves us to pause, and ask seriously, Why we go to War? In such a state of things, the cause *should* be the most obvious, the most striking

striking to the senses of every individual in the kingdom, from the well-informed politician to the meanest mechanic, the simplest peasant of the land; a cause that should urge him to snatch the first hedge-stake in his way—*Furor arma ministret*—to oppose an insulting and aggressive foe. We are told it is to repel aggression and insult; aggression and insult are reechoed from the shores of France. Who then shall decide? Shall we vaguely say, the Chief Consul has been impertinent, or, that he declines our trade, wants plans of our ports, and soundings of our harbours, which he may buy in any map-shop in London—that he has asked us to send away the Bourbon princes, which we refuse, and he urges it no more—that he does not like to be abused, and wants us to suppress the scurrility of our newspapers, which we refuse to do, and he is silent—that he declares we cannot fight him single handed, which we have a mind to try—that we insist upon retaining Malta, which we had specifically agreed to evacuate in three months after the conclusion of the treaty of Amiens; or that it is for the land of Egypt, for Malabar and Coromandel, for the territories of the Grand Turk and the Great Mogul? At such an answer (and it is the truest and most concise that can be given), would not the rustic stare, the mechanic wonder, the better-informed be confounded?

We were made to believe, indeed, on the 8th of March, that the enemy was at our gate, or quickly would be there: “Arm, arm, and out!” was the idea insinuated, “for the treacherous foe has been meditating an invasion of this island ever since he has lulled us by the treaty of Amiens, and is now ready to accomplish his purpose.” What would have been the sensations in this country, if, three days after such danger was announced, it had been known, as it is now, that there were but two frigates in the roads of Holland, and but three corvettes in the roads of Dunkirk; and that Bonaparte had no more idea, at the time of the  
message,



message, of invading this country, than he had of invading the empire of China?

That our Ministers should have been so deceived in information, is unaccountable: for I must suppose they were deceived, having too high an opinion of the integrity and abilities of our Premier, Mr. Addington, to imagine, he meant by false assertion either to raise a ferment, and alarm the nation, preparatory to an intended renewal of the war, if the defects of the treaty of Amiens could not be remedied by the plans he proposed; or to account for the news of the retention of the Cape of Good Hope. If then there were no armaments in the ports of Holland and France, and no intention of attacking this country, Why do we go to War? Aggression and insult are again rung in our ears; and if an inquirer would know what these vague and indefinite terms mean, would investigate this cause, this cause that should be contained in a nut-shell, be defined in three words, he is referred to above 100 folio pages, or two large octavo pamphlets, which, when he has carefully perused, and perplexed his brain with St. John of Jerusalem, Priories and Langues, mutual accusation and recrimination, wrapped in the verbosity of diplomatic form, he will probably need the assistance of some able Judge to sum up the evidence, guide his decision, and direct his verdict. Let us then examine the charges, as they are stated in the abstract and appear in the declaration.—They consist principally of eight.

1. The first, and perhaps the heaviest respects the confiscation of our merchant ships. In the early part of the last war the French prohibited the importation of English goods and manufactures, which prohibition they did not think proper to take off at the peace. We did not stipulate that they should; they had an undoubted right therefore to make what regulations and restrictions they pleased: it was a blind and pitiful policy, and would have corrected itself, had we let

them alone ; they would have perceived in a short time the reciprocal advantages of a commercial intercourse. We cannot beat them into trading with us, or cannonade them into friendship. If the harshness and severity employed in the execution of the law were matters of complaint and causes of war, it should not only have been represented, as it was indeed, by Mr. Merry, but satisfaction insisted upon before we resigned our long catalogue of conquests : for the affair of the *Fame* packet occurred in December 1801, and that of the brig *George*, where the knives and forks were seized, in August 1802 ; and in the following December, at the opening of Parliament, it was declared there was no reason to doubt of the permanency of the peace. We may presume, therefore, our Government was satisfied.

2. The next relates to the commercial agents, or commissaries sent into this country to be stationed at our different sea-ports, by way of consuls over trade, with these instructions among others, viz.

*Instruction* 11. “ You are required to furnish a plan of the ports of your district, with a specification of the soundings for mooring vessels.”

*Instruction* 12. “ If no plan of the ports can be procured, you are to point out with what wind vessels can come in and go out, and what is the greatest draught of water with which vessels can enter therein deeply laden.”

Now, not to mention that this information was really necessary in a commercial view merely, or that plans of our ports with soundings may be purchased at any good map-seller's in London ; grant that it was meant to be availed of in case of hostilities taking place at any time between the two countries, and that it was highly insidious, it was not matter of such uncommon provocation : and no one, I think, who is acquainted with the various intrigues of the old Cabinet of Versailles, will assert that that Cabinet, or perhaps

perhaps any other, would have had the smallest scruple of adopting a similar measure, had opportunity occurred; and an accredited minister or envoy would be deemed very properly alert in his office, who could procure his government such information. But what was done on the occasion? The vigilance of our Administration discovered the instructions, dismissed the commissaries, and France took them back again. Where then is the cause of War? Excuse (truly or falsely) was even made, and the information was intended for the completion of a work in the nature of that entitled, "The Balance of Commerce,"—Vide p. 217, *Part 2d of Correspondence*: and there is some colour for this in the 10th article of instruction, which requires the course of exchange from 1792 to 1801, and which could mean nothing but in a retrospective view. When first Mr. Coquebert Montbret was sent to London in May 1802, he appears to have been sent for the express purpose of entering into a commercial arrangement. Mr. Otto's Letter to Lord Hawkesbury (*Correspondence*, P. 2, page 212) is couched in these terms:

"Portman Square, May 23, 1802.

"My Lord,

"His Britannic Majesty's Government having often manifested to me a desire to concert some particular arrangements for the establishment or the maintenance of several relations of commerce between the two nations; I have the satisfaction to inform your Excellency, that the First Consul, penetrated with the same sentiments, and having a particular desire to consolidate the relations of friendship so happily re-established between the two nations, has determined to send without delay to London, Citizen Coquebert Montbret, who has lately resided at Amsterdam with the character of Commissary General of Commerce. He has received orders to repair to London as soon as possible, to cooperate with me on every thing relative to this important negotiation; and I am particularly

A 4

directed



directed to assure the British Government, that the First Consul desires to conduct it promptly to a termination mutually *advantageous*.

“ I have the honour to be, &c. OTTO.”

One should imagine from this letter, from such cordial materials, something might, with tolerable management, have been worked up into an amicable treaty ; but we hear nothing of any arrangements being likely to take place : instead of which, letters are opened, jealousy and distrust prevail, the commissaries are dismissed, and we bring the very presumption of appointing them as a cause for war.

3. The third is, desiring us to send away the emigrants, under the idea that they seek to raise disturbances in the interior of France, and to *recommend* to the Princes of the House of Bourbon to join the head of their family at Warsaw. What do we answer ? Why with manliness and humanity, that as long as they behave peaceably towards us, nor plot against them, we will not refuse the hospitable protection they stand so much in need of. They urge it no more. Is there then in this a cause for War ?

4. Fourthly it is stated, We have suffered an indignity by the “ requisition, which the French Government has repeatedly urged, that the laws and constitution of this country should be changed, relative to the liberty of the press.” These are the words of the declaration. Let us see what is the complaint and what is the request, and how far it can be said they have required an alteration in our laws and constitution. They complain that ever since the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens, the English press has not ceased to calumniate and revile the French and their government, to represent their republic in the most odious and degrading light, that the people are appealed to against it, and instigated thereby to insurrection and rebellion. They observe, “ That the particular laws and constitution of Great Britain are subordinate to  
“ the

“ the general principles of the law of nations,  
 “ that if it be a right in England to allow the  
 “ most extensive liberty to the press, it is a pub-  
 “ lic right of polished nations, and the bounden  
 “ duty of governments, to prevent, repress, and  
 “ punish every attack which might by those means  
 “ be made against the rights, the interests, and the  
 “ honour of foreign powers. They retort with jus-  
 “ tice, that the French writings furnished in England  
 “ a plausible pretext in vindication of the necessity  
 “ of the last war ; and will England now put the same  
 “ weapon into the hands of the French ?” This is  
 all but too true ; I believe, universally allowed. All  
 sober-minded Englishmen felt scandalised at the  
 daily abuse, and looked forward in sorrowful pre-  
 sage to the serious mischief it would ultimately  
 occasion : it might and ought to have been cor-  
 rected. I am as much attached as any man to the  
 liberty of the press ; am availing myself of the pri-  
 vilege of it at this moment : but is it wise, is it just  
 in any government, to permit the public tranquillity,  
 of the nation to be endangered by the licentiousness  
 of the press, unless the nation chooses thereby to  
 intimate its own dispositions ? Was it to be expected  
 that the First Consul should patiently and quietly  
 endure to be so personally abused, and hear the peo-  
 ple he commanded perpetually excited to revolt ? Was  
 it consistent with the very first article of the treaty  
 of peace ? Was it “ carefully avoiding every thing  
 “ which might hereafter affect the union happily  
 “ re-established between the two nations ?” Was it  
 possible to maintain that union under such continued  
 irritation ? And what was required, or rather what  
 was solicited ? Mr. Otto’s note (*p. 39, Official Cor-  
 respondence*) says, “ The undersigned has in conse-  
 “ quence received a special order to *solicit*,

“ That his Majesty’s Government will adopt the  
 “ most effectual measures to put a stop to the  
 “ unbecoming



“ unbecoming and seditious publications with which  
 “ the newspapers and other writings in England are  
 “ filled.”

Is this then called requiring our laws and constitution to be changed?—and what is our answer? We begin by accusing them of want of temper (vide Lord Hawkesbury's Letter, p. 41); acknowledge that very improper paragraphs have been inserted in our newspapers, and publications of a still more improper and indecent nature, appeared under the signature of foreigners: that the French have thought proper to resort to recrimination. We then talk highly of the liberty of our press; insinuate we mean to continue to abuse them: but they need not read our pamphlets or newspapers unless they like it, or admit them into their country, but punish those who do. The French are silent: they mention the subject no more. We call ourselves insulted, go to war, and adduce the requisition as one of the causes.

There is good reason for thinking, this marked dislike, this reiterated abuse, has been a great means of promoting the unhappy rupture, and may eternize its duration. This is what, “*manet altâ mente repositum.*”—This is the “*spretæ injuria formæ,*” not indeed of the person of the First Consul, but of his government and authority, that rankles in his breast, that he cannot forgive. There was a time, undoubtedly, when he felt anxious to obtain the good opinion and friendship of this country; but rejected with disdain, loaded with abuse, goaded by the constant language of reproach, his preference is become disgust, his partiality hatred, his desire of approaching us in amity, that of approaching us in vengeance. Some may exclaim, We wish not his friendship:—perhaps so:—but the voice of the nation will unite in the cry, We wish not his enmity. And here one cannot avoid lamenting that men, amiable and sensible, the ornaments of their country, like the Grenville's

or that a man of talents and integrity, a gentleman and a scholar, like a Windham, should have lent a fostering hand to such abuse; and when once the peace was made, and all our conquests given up, should have joined in discrediting and degrading that peace, (whatever their private disapprobation might have been), exposing every weakness of it with the bitterest censure, representing it as fatal to the country; thus keeping alive resentments, fanning the faint embers of discontent, until they have burst into a flame that may devour the world. I will not however offend the feelings and the virtues of these gentlemen so far, as to lay the whole blame upon their shoulders, or let all the blood that may be spilt, bear upon their heads alone: they have hallooed indeed these dogs of war, opened wide the gates of their infernal kennel, which tempted others, less disposed, to join in the cry of "Havock," and let them loose once more upon the panting world. Alas! when again their teeth are fleshed, allured by rapine, whetted by revenge, who shall be found to chain them up again?—who bid them cease to worry and to tear, to ravage and destroy?

Upon reexamining these three last articles in search of insult and aggression, what is there to be found but wishes we would not grant, desires we would not comply with?

They send commercial agents into the country; we turn them out again, and say, No, they shall not come here. They ask, Will you send away the emigrants, and desire the Bourbons to retire? We answer, No. Will you suppress the abuse of us in your newspapers, and put a stop to the scandalous publications? We repeat, No. And are we not content? Are we so testy and so quarrelsome, we will not submit to be solicited, but must accompany our refusal with a blow—enforce our negative with war? then call ourselves degraded, vilified, and insulted—our laws and constitution endangered,

endangered, the liberty of our press invaded? Haughty Britons! beware how ye *merit* the name too often applied, of proud, overbearing, insolent islanders.

Fifthly, The *presumption* of affirming that *Great Britain cannot singly contend against the power of France*, is too puerile to be commented upon: it was unworthy the dignity of a great nation to make the assertion, and unworthy that of another, gravely to bring it forward among the causes for war. I should not have thought it worth while to have brought the matter to the test, had the Chief Consul, in still more boyish frolic affirmed, *He would fight us with one hand tied behind him*.

The subsequent paragraph in the same paper of communication (*Official Correspondence*, p. xxiii), is more worth our attention.

“ But we have better hopes; and we believe in the  
“ British cabinet nothing will be listened to but the  
“ counsels of wisdom, and the voice of humanity.”

Sixthly.—*Manifesto published in the Hamburg Gazette*.—It is not a little surprising to find inserted in the catalogue of offences; this Manifesto; for upon our demand of immediate satisfaction, every authority from the French Government for the publication of it was denied, and most *completely disavowed* (*vide Official Correspondence*, p. 127). Upon our further insisting that, as the insult was public, so must be the reparation; M. Talleyrand answered: “ The First Consul considered M. Rheinhardt’s conduct so reprehensible, that every satisfaction might be expected!”

If then the paper was really published by order of the First Consul, we have the sacrifice of truth on the altar of Peace. What would we have more? A futile argument is sometimes made use of, that these causes are nothing if singly taken, but all together amount to a sufficient one. But if individually they are nothing, and are proved to be so, can an aggregate of *nothings* ever amount to any thing?

Does



Does there yet then appear a reason why we go to war?

Let us now consider the charge of aggrandisement, and, not to enter into the discussion how far the acquisition of territory by one state, will justify another in demanding or procuring an acquisition to theirs by way of counterbalance; upon which principle any two powerful states might divide the world: but ask the question fairly, Whether the situation of Europe was essentially different at the time of the Message in March 1803, from what it was at the signing of the Treaty of Amiens, March 1802? What alteration had the Chief Consul effected? Was not Piedmont his own, Parma agreed for, Switzerland at his command, Holland subdued? What could be the difference whether he annexed Piedmont to France, or not? If a man has taken my purse, of what consequence is it whether he holds it in his hand or puts it into his pocket? Well might he say to Lord Whitworth, respecting Piedmont and Switzerland, "*Ce sont des bagatelles.*" They certainly were trifles, not worth our while to go to war about: his seizing them was a circumstance that might and ought to have been, and probably was, foreseen at the conclusion of the peace. He agreed to evacuate Switzerland by the treaty of Luneville; but the treaty of Luneville was not made with us, but with Austria. His breaking a treaty with Austria, is not breaking one with us; upon Austria then is the aggression. Why are we to avenge the insults upon Austria? Let those who made the treaty, fight for the fulfilment of it. If the Emperor of Germany, the King of Prussia, and all the continental States, whom it infinitely more concerns than England, are too weak or too supine to interfere, why are we to fight their battles? Why are we, almost the only people yet unsubdued, to distress and exhaust ourselves in vain and ineffectual efforts to preserve kingdoms

doms for others, till we endanger the existence of our own?

One cannot but be grieved that a people so generous, a country so delightful as Switzerland, should wither under the gripe of despotism and oppression; and it would have been a gallant piece of Quixotism to have prevented such a fate by our assistance, if possible. We endeavoured to do it, broke our treaty to do it, retook the Cape of Good Hope, and would have dashed precipitately into war, could we have got the other powers to have joined. We might then indeed have entered into an impolitic war with honour, to repel violence and aggression; whereas now we plunge into an impolitic war, with all the odium of aggression and breach of faith upon our backs. We remonstrated in favour of the Swiss; but the Swiss submitted, and we said no more. How then is this business, which was settled in October 1802, brought up again as a cause for war in May 1803?

We did all we could to get into a war for an object politically of no consequence to us: indeed the possession of Switzerland by the French, is a manifest advantage to this country: it occupies their troops, removes them farther from us; gives them a territory they must always be upon the alert to retain, subject to perpetual insurrection and revolt. It is a different case with Holland. The possession of Holland by the French, might be of material ill consequence to us; but there was no stipulation in our treaty of Amiens, that the First Consul should withdraw his troops from thence; they lingered there, to the annoyance of the Dutch, and jealousy of our government; the greatest part of them undoubtedly intended for the expeditions to Louisiana and St. Domingo (would we had let them quietly embark for those places!) The Dutch made some remonstrances (urging their departure), in which we would have joined, but they wished us to desist, for fear of drawing down upon them the fate  
of



of Switzerland (*vide Mr. Liston's Letter, p. 201*). Bonaparte afterwards declared he would withdraw his troops, the moment the treaty of Amiens was fully completed on our part, and Malta evacuated according to agreement. We however do not fulfil our treaty, but go to war. The French seize their territory, and we their ships.—So much for the Dutch.

When the French are accused of annexing Piedmont and Parma to their dominions, it is added, “without allotting any provision to the King of Sardinia, whom they had despoiled, though bound by a solemn engagement to the Emperor of Russia, to attend to his interest and provide for his establishments\*.” Is this aggression and violence against us? It is aggression against Russia. Are we to monopolise all insult and aggression? What says the Emperor of Russia? Nothing, that we hear of. Are we then to fight for the fulfilment of engagements with Russia, and treaties with Austria? To make unprecedented sacrifices and unheard of efforts, for the two great Emperors of Europe, while they look on at ease? Is it to be the guardian of good faith, moderation and justice, that thus dauntless and alone we throw down the gauntlet before the giant power?—to prevent innocent states from being insulted and despoiled, and shield the world from his colossal arm; to protect the universal globe, from the German Ocean to the Indian Sea, to emancipate the Dutch, liberate Switzerland, defend Egypt, Palestine and Syria, the Ottoman Empire, Persia and Indostan?

Magnanimous idea! But is there reason to imagine we shall obtain one single object; reconquer from Bonaparte one of his European acquisitions; drive Egypt from his head, or India from his thoughts: yet unless upon these knight-errantlike principles, unless to attack these windmills, is there a cause why we should be harrassed with the calamities of war?

\* Vide Declaration.

8. I come now to the last and grand subject of Malta. Let us see how we stand justified upon that ground.

Malta, by the 10th Article of the Treaty of Amiens we appear specifically and absolutely to have agreed to evacuate within the space of three months after the signature: we kept it twelve, then demand it for ten years longer; which not being complied with, we commence hostilities. What is our defence? That the agreement is provisional. What says the agreement?

Article X. "The islands of Malta, Gozo, and Comino, shall be restored to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and shall be held by it upon the same conditions on which the Order held them previous to the war, and under the following stipulations."

Then follow 13 paragraphs of stipulations. The first relates to the choosing a Grand Master by the Knights of the Order, whose *langues* (*i. e.* countries where the Order possesses property and priories) shall continue to subsist after the ratification, who are invited to return and choose one. The second excludes the English and French from the Order. The third establishes a Maltese *langue* (*i. e.* a knight chosen from the natives of Malta). The fourth runs thus:

4. "The forces of his Britannic Majesty shall evacuate the island and its dependencies, within three months after the exchange of the ratifications, or sooner if it can be done: at that period the island shall be delivered up to the Order, in the state in which it now is; *provided*, that the Grand Master, or Commissioners, fully empowered according to the statutes of the Order, be upon the island, to receive possession; and that the force to be furnished by his Sicilian Majesty, as hereafter stipulated, shall be arrived there."

This is the only provisional clause, and this was punctually performed: 2000 Neapolitan troops did  
arrive

arrive in the island, and the Grand Master was ready to receive possession. It is no where said, the English forces shall evacuate the island, provided the Powers named agree to the guaranty. It is only in the 6th paragraph mentioned, that

6. "The independence of the islands of Malta, Gozo, and Comino, as well as the present arrangement, shall be under the protection and guaranty of Great Britain, France, Austria, Spain, Russia, and Prussia."

*Shall be!* What! Whether they will consent or not? They were not present at the treaty, previously consulted, or applied to; some or all of them might therefore refuse. Their power to do so, and the supposition that they might, was clearly implied by the thirteenth and concluding paragraph. "The several Powers specified in paragraph 6, viz. Great Britain, &c. shall be *invited* to accede to the present arrangement." It was pretty evident, that one of them, and that a principal guest at this "great bidding" would refuse (that is Russia); for the stipulation in the third paragraph, establishing a Maltese langue (or knight), was particularly disagreeable to the Emperor: you make a clause in a treaty you know he dislikes, then invite him to become a party in it; you might as well provide a feast, in which the principal viand is pork, and invite a Jewish rabbi to partake; you cannot wonder if he refuses your invitation, with some scorn perhaps. The first thing done by another Power\*, named as guarantee, is to seize upon the priories and property of the Knights in his dominions; another† declares he don't care to trouble himself about the island or its knights; another‡, that he will do as the rest do. Amiable guarantees! well chosen protectors! Can we then pretend it is for want

B

of

\* Spain.

† Prussia, Official Correspondence, p. 69.

‡ Austria (Declaration, p. xxxix.)



of such guarantees and such protectors, that we will not restore the island of Malta according to treaty. Did not Lord Cornwallis himself declare (*Official Correspondence*, p. 88), that Spain was inadmissible as a guarantee, Naples too weak, and Russia too far off?

However, to deprive us of this pretence, the Powers named do at length agree to the guaranty, except Russia, who transmits certain alterations and conditions upon which she is willing to accede to it; together with a letter (dated November 12, 1802), which letter, for some reason or other, is omitted in the *Official Correspondence*, and is found only in the *French Official Correspondence*, p. 163, and gives much information. The Emperor therein expresses "his sincere wish to confirm the continuance of peace existing between the two principal contending parties; that it would be impossible for him to accede to stipulations, which are not only contrary to *his wishes expressed relative to the Order*, but inconsistent with what had been agreed upon *anterior* to that treaty, betwixt his Imperial Majesty and one of the two contracting Powers; then invites the parties to a convention, to revise and modify this article relative to Malta." Here then is an opening for accommodation and adjustment: why was it not attended to, and a meeting held? Did the French object? We are not told that they did. We find a letter from Lord Hawkesbury to Count Woronzoff (*Official Correspondence*, Part 2, p. 205), stating an agreement to most of the conditions proposed by the Court of Russia, only objecting to more Neapolitan troops being sent into the island, as a Maltese force of 2000 men was raising, which, with the 2000 Neapolitans, would be sufficient for the defence of the island. (Lord Hawkesbury had, in a preceding letter (p. 204), declared, that the Maltese inhabitants were equal to its defence. Why then make such a point of the guaranty?) Lord Hawkesbury's letter furthermore states, that to provide  
adequate

adequate funds for the support of the garrison, he will adopt the suggestion of the Emperor, that whatever sum shall be required for that purpose, beyond the ordinary revenue, shall be provided by an equal contribution on the part of the English and French Governments; and in default of payment of either of the parties, it shall be at the option of the other party *to pay the whole*. Poor England! alas! how ready are we on all occasions to make an ill-timed sacrifice of our money and our blood, for some fancied chimerical advantage. What the answer was to this letter of Lord Hawkesbury does not appear; we seem afterwards reluctant to attend to any mediation from the Emperor, who manifests the pain he feels at hearing the resolution of the English to retain Malta. So that we shall probably disgust the only Power able to afford us any assistance in our emergency, and be left reprobated and abandoned by all Europe.

Our consciences, I fear, somewhat accuse us respecting our behaviour to the Maltese, to whom we owed much obligation for the assistance they gave, and sacrifices they made in taking the island. We knew they hated the French, they hated the Knights; but finding it convenient to conclude the treaty of Amiens, we gave them up into the hands of the Knights\*, to their utter dismay, and made a feeble provision against their falling into the hands of the French: then find it convenient to break the treaty of Amiens, and endeavour to stipulate that the Maltese shall have the island; abandoning the interests of the Knights, of Switzerland, and the King of Sardinia.

The French are fond of resembling us to Carthage; but let us not give all nations reason to join in fixing on us the Carthaginian opprobrium, and making the *Fides Anglica* proverbial as the *Fides Punica*.

B 2

Another

\* Vide Sir Robert Wilson's account of the receipt of the news of the preliminaries of peace at Malta.



Another excuse for not surrendering the island, is the seizure of the priories and revenues by that notable guarantee the King of Spain, thus abolishing the Spanish langue or knights, by which we assert the Order not to be the same Order it was when the treaty was made. I am afraid this will appear but a paltry subterfuge. What does this plea amount to?

That there are not so many knights, and they are not so rich; still there are knights; there is an Order; it is not abolished. There are, according to the first paragraph of the tenth article of the treaty, "knights of the Order whose langues subsist," to be invited to choose a Grand Master; which was done: they were invited, and a Grand Master chosen. If the funds for the support of the Order should not prove sufficient, that is a matter of little difficulty, the inexhaustible wealth of Great Britain will readily supply any deficiencies.

If this plea fail, we have recourse to the spirit of the treaty, and claim to act according to the spirit, in defiance of the letter; and charge France with having virtually commenced the first infringement of the treaty, by her aggrandisement; but it has been proved that France has not aggrandised herself in any material manner. But granting she had in some degree, what a pretence does this argument give for any state to avail itself of the slightest alteration taking place after the most solemn treaty; in order to break that treaty if found disadvantageous or inconvenient! Can the distinction between the spirit and the letter be admitted in solemn and written engagements between two nations, never loosely drawn up, but where every expression is weighed, examined, and appreciated? What an opportunity for every subtilty and artifice would be the result of adhering to the spirit, in neglect of the letter, in such engagements!

Notwithstanding, however, these equivocations and evasions, we seemed at length upon the point of surrendering,

rendering, when, on a sudden, appears the formidable and terrific report of Sebastiani, which, like an earthquake, shakes the Grand Signior on his throne, makes Egypt totter, the farthest India tremble. What does this curious paper say? That General Stuart is a man of *mediocre* talent (this was certainly very rude on the part of the Colonel, and very unlike a gentleman); talks with great parade of the love and regard borne by the natives to the French, and their hatred to the English: as a proof of the first, the guides are threatened with the bastinado for marching before a Frenchman, and Dgezzar Pacha stifles his *resentment* through fear. Our long protracted stay in Alexandria, beyond the term allotted in the treaty, may well account for the latter; all Christians are dogs held in equal abhorrence by the Mahometans, and they probably will prefer the last dog that drives out the others. That General Stuart sent a letter to the Pacha of Cairo, enclosing an order of the day of the First Consul, in August 1799, recalling to the recollection of the Egyptians, that Constantinople was tributary to Arabia, and the time come to restore Cairo to its supremacy and destroy the Ottoman Empire; and begging the Pacha to consider the spirit of that order, and judge of the attachment of the French. The Colonel expresses himself indignant to find that a soldier of one of the most polite nations of Europe, should degrade himself so far, as to instigate assassination by means of such an insinuation. Now, though there is no doubt of this being the farthest thing from the intention and thought of the General; yet, in such a country, among such a people; it was a consequence that might possibly have resulted.

The Turks, Sebastiani seems to think, might have taken it into their heads to have given that testimony of their friendship. He asserts, that the islands of the Ionian Sea will declare themselves French the first opportunity; but it does by no means follow, from

that assertion, that they will. He concludes, with enumerating the English forces, declaring "that 6000 French would be sufficient to conquer Egypt." This is, I imagine, the whole that is found so offensive and alarming in this report. As to the last declaration, a similar one might have been made by any traveller, concerning any country; he might declare his opinion as to what force was capable, in the situation it was in, of conquering it, without there being the smallest intention of such force being employed for that purpose: it must also be taken into consideration, that, somehow or other, we had contrived to remain so much longer in Alexandria, than we ought to have done by treaty, that we excited disgust and jealousy to both the Powers of Turkey and France.

From this report, however, such is the strong conception we entertain of the Chief Consul having immediate designs upon Egypt, that though he repeatedly avers he has none, and that were an attempt upon it in his power, he should not think it worth his while to risk a war by so violent an act, and draw upon himself the resentment of all Europe, yet our terrified imagination paints him darting like a meteor from Toulon to Malta, from Malta to Egypt, from Egypt gliding down the Red Sea, or skimming along the desert, to rifle our treasures in the East. We now cease to be scrupulous, and, after a few hints about compensation, satisfaction, and security, puzzled with the question of what satisfaction and what security, we throw off all disguise, and frankly own we mean to keep Malta for ever; and as we had before put them in mind, that we were in possession of the object in dispute, and that every modification must be looked upon as a concession (*Official Correspondence*, p. 133), now seem to resort to that kind of argument used respecting some of our Indian possessions: "By force of arms we acquired them, by arms  
" we



“ we will maintain them\* ;” and like the bold baron of gothic times, striking our hand upon our sword’s hilt, cry, “ This is our title, this is our right.” We however relax a little from keeping Malta for ever, and come to our final and ultimate proposal, *viz.*

I. The island of Lampedosa in perpetuity.

II. To retain Malta till Lampedosa is got ready for us as a naval station, then resign it to the Maltese inhabitants.

III. Batavian Republic to be evacuated.

IV. The King of Etruria and Italian Republic to be acknowledged by his Majesty.

V. Switzerland to be evacuated by the French forces.

VI. Provision to be assigned to the King of Sardinia.

*Secret Article.*

Malta shall not be required to be evacuated until after ten years.

The three last Articles may be all omitted, or all inserted.

An answer to this demanded, in thirty-six hours.

The French ask in amazement, is there an example in the records of history, of so imperious. an ultimatum?

Let us cast away prejudice and partiality, and ask, Was it *not* a most imperious ultimatum? Will not the secret article answer this? That kind shelter to their honour; that shelter from the appearance of coercion which they had complained of, and that delicate acquiescence in their desire to have the draught made palatable; (*Official Correspondence*, p. 153) does it not acknowledge our offers to be such as they would be ashamed openly to confess their acceptance of?

B 4

I will

\* *Vide* Messrs. Lawrence and Dundas.—House of Commons.

I will ask, would not this country feel indignant at the idea of a secret article in a treaty, to conceal its disgrace? Should not we look upon the proposal as an affront? and is France so abject, so reduced, as not to be capable of feeling a similar indignation?

Shall we throw all the blame of haughtiness and insult upon our enemies? Is there none on our own side? Have we really been so tame, submissive, and peaceful? Will they not retort upon us, how are the relations of amity and peace to be maintained with such a people? What assurance in future can be given they will ever adhere to any engagements they may fancy it their interest to break? They have appealed "to our equity and conscience, conjuring us to lay aside all sophistry and mental reservation; else, what means will be left to the two nations to come to an understanding? All will be chaos, and another calamity added to those that have menaced social order." (*French Papers*, p. 113.)

This demands our most solemn reflection. If we persist in rejecting all conciliatory projects from Russia, who has marked a disapproval of our conduct; what must Europe think of us? How will the Dutch feel the situation we have brought them into? the Swiss, the Romans, the Neapolitans? Have we not lighted a firebrand, and hurled it on the Continent, to consume it with inextinguishable flame? Are we not the western and tempestuous blast, to drive and urge that flame to the destruction of the neighbouring States? Was it not evident, the moment we went to war, that the French would seize upon Hanover, make Holland a province, bind Switzerland closer in their chains, overrun Italy from Piedmont to Tarentum, adding the rich island of Sicily? What is to be gained by this mad policy? If, with renewed expense of blood and treasure, we should succeed again in having a long catalogue of conquered colonies to produce, shall we purchase a better peace than that of Amiens? Possibly not so good.



It is argued, that if we did not now go to war, the Chief Consul would have commenced war with us in two or three years, or perhaps one year (according to the fancy of the reasoner), when he was better prepared. This is at most but a *petitio principii*, a begging the question; and is by no means likely to have been the case. It is a bad and ungenerous principle to go to war upon, in the best lights; but when injustice and breach of faith are added, it is the worst of all. But, to take it in a political view, and leave honesty out of the question, why not enjoy a little repose for a few years at least, a little breathing time, to refresh and recruit our own jaded spirits in? Why not wait, and let the accusation of violence and aggression deservedly fall on him? He was evidently loth to take upon himself such an odium. Why not trust to time and chance? the accidents of nature? and let the people be tired of the consulate, disgusted with restraint, his army dissatisfied and divided, a great part sent to Louisiana and St. Domingo, and leave to other States an opportunity of recovering from their weakness and depression? Instead of which, we furnish him a plea for incursion and violence, afford resources to his armies, pay to his soldiery, give them an object and occupation, and unite his whole kingdom in one common cause against us, whom they load with the hateful name of common disturbers of the peace of mankind.

Had we observed him active and diligent in making hostile preparations, we should have been active too; had he bestowed great attention to the increase of his navy, we might have increased ours also. He has asserted himself, and perhaps with some truth, that it would take him ten years to procure a navy equal to stand a contest with ours; but allowing that he had in some measure accomplished it in five, how was he to begin his new career, commence his grand exploits?—Let us trace the supposed consequence of evacuating Malta, as we were bound to do. Suppose only we have  
been

been honest and faithful: he is then suddenly to seize on that island, by a violent act of aggression; must commit another act of gross violence, in an attack upon the Turkish Empire in Egypt; must get possession of that country in spite of the efforts of other European Powers to prevent it, or of our own, if it be thought prudent to make any; to establish, in defiance of the Turks, the Mamelukes and the Arabs, a tranquil and composed colony there, in spite of pestilence, ophthalmy, elephantiasis, and all the minor plagues of the country! Then to think of terminating the climax of his glory by the execution of the grand Indian scheme! How is he to set about it? how is he to get there, by sea or by land? If by sea, will he bring ships from Toulon, and cut through the Isthmus, or will he build ships at Suez? In the whole country there is not timber enough for the common purposes of agricultural implements\*. Will he plant acorns in the desert, and wait for their growth? Will he transport the oaks of France? When at last his ships are built, they must proceed by a most tiresome and hazardous navigation down the Red Sea to the narrow Streights of Babelmandel, where a very few English men of war would block them up. Will his adventurous spirit prompt him to attempt the expedition by land? Upon looking into a map, it will be perceived there are at least 40 degrees of longitude between Cairo and Cambaia on the North-West coast of India, which, multiplied by 55, nearly the number of English miles in a degree of longitude, at that distance from the equator, and we shall have 2200 miles in a right line, so that we may fairly say 3000 miles for this gallant hero to march his troops, over burning sands and pathless deserts, in spite of whirlwinds and Sirocco blasts. Or will he conquer Persia, and set up his staff finally at Ispahan, perhaps restore the ancient Babylon, thence march like another Alexander to the banks of the Indus? It has been said, he has conceived serious

\* *Vide* Sir Robert Wilson.

serious thoughts of possessing himself of Jerusalem, and recalling the Jews to their former habitation. He may then unite in one harmonious concord, Turks, Christians, Jews, and Babylonians. By whatever way he is to get to India, does it follow that when he is got there he must conquer the country, and drive us out of it? Do we not possess there immense territory and power, which have been lately farther strengthened by the valuable acquisition of Ceylon. Even after all, granting that by the most extraordinary fortune, and most unexpected and miraculous success, he has overcome every obstacle and really driven us out of the Indies, shall we pay so bad a compliment as to think so meanly of our resources, as to affirm, we shall even then be ruined and undone? Do we depend solely upon India for our revenue and commerce? Do we exist but upon India?

Is it then for this distant, very distant prospect of evil, the lengthened perspective of which diminishes to a scarce discernible point, this chimera, this dream of ills within no bounds of probability, that we are to embrace a certain and immediate calamity; to plunge into the horrors of a war to which we see no end; to be called upon to sacrifice our comforts and our peace; to be harrassed and tormented with the perpetual threatenings of an invading enemy, whom, out of idle fear of imaginary danger to a remote and scarcely approachable colony, we draw to our very heart and centre? Unaccountable infatuation! And wherefore this sudden alarm about Malta? Why is it become so suddenly of such consequence? Mr. Pitt himself told us, at the time of the treaty of Amiens, that it was better to cede every port in the Mediterranean, and keep Trinidad. Lord St. Vincent and Lord Nelson, two great authorities, do not deem it necessary to keep a port there—and now we are to risk our existence for one? Why did we not stipulate for Malta, if so absolutely necessary, when our conquests were in our hands? If we agreed to give it up, is it worth even the appearance of being retained contrary



trary to treaty? A war to maintain our wrong, with every disadvantage, and every odium accumulated upon us? What is this Egypt, what is this Malta, that we are to die for? Not indeed Egypt, or Malta, in reality, but the airy image of them, the impression of them we have found upon the *sensorium* of the Chief Consul, because he has *desired* them, upon the principle on which Seneca rigidly censures the frail female, "*Incesta est sine stupro, quæ cupit stuprum.*" Was it a new thing to perceive Egypt in the brain of the First Consul? Was it not ever there? Has it not been frequently in the brain of those who govern France? Was not the colonizing Egypt in the head of Louis XIV, a partition of the Turkish dominions thought of by Louis XVI, in 1786?

Should Bonaparte persist in his wild plans respecting Egypt, it would be the worst policy this country could adopt to obstruct them. Let the boy have his plaything; he may possibly use it as play-things are commonly used, enjoyed with a short-lived pleasure, cherished for a season; then broken in pieces, what is useful taken out, and the fragments thrown aside with disappointment and ill humour.

Little, however, is it to be expected that the counsels of temperance should be heard amidst the din of arms and tumult of passion. Had England been in the habit of attending to a warning voice, much blood and treasure had been saved to the nation. In the American war a voice cried, Give up America; had it been at first attended to, how much would have been saved? America was obliged to be given up. But the "Sun of England, instead of setting for ever," as pronounced by great authority, set not at all; but like the sun beyond the Arctic circle, wheeled up again to its meridian height, and shone with brighter lustre\*. In the

\* Mr. Gentz, in his excellent work on the State of Europe, asserts, that "the loss of the Colonies was the first æra of the lasting and independent greatness of Great Britain.



the last war many voices cried, "Make peace, seize your opportunity; the longer you delay, the worse peace you will make." I will leave the fact to justify the advice and the prediction. What will be the case in this instance? After millions upon millions expended, and blood upon blood shed in vain, the French, if they choose to persist, will in all probability sooner or later be in possession of Egypt; and if our drained treasury and exhausted veins recover, if we do not perish under the conflict, things will go on as well, or better than they did before, and India be as safe.

Having now gone distinctly through every clause, investigated every reason that can well be brought forward in vindication of the war we have undertaken, I leave the question to the cool consideration of the country. At the same time deprecating the charge of pleading for our enemy, an usurper, a spoiler and a murderer, as some with vehemence may express themselves; I am not an advocate for Bonaparte; I am an advocate for justice, for good policy, and common sense. My opinion of the Chief Consul differs but little from that of the generality of mankind; I feel equally with others the injustice of his usurpation, and rigour of his despotism; and if what he is accused of be true, of which I fear there is hardly a doubt, there are few epithets that can be bestowed upon him fouler than he deserves; and were I to hear he had paid the forfeit of his crimes, should be ready to exclaim in the line of Homer, quoted by Scipio, when he heard of the death of Tiberius Gracchus,

“Ὡς ἀπολοῖτο καὶ ἄλλος ὅτις τοιαῦτα γέρεζοι.

Far be it from me to impede the chance of that desirable event, a reasonable peace, by disturbing the operations of Government, or checking the energies of the country! But I wish those energies not to be wasted, nor that a consciousness of wrong should press  
upon

upon the heart, and weigh down the arm of a single individual in the day of battle. If the justice and policy of a war is not to be scrutinized, because it is entered upon, a war the most wantonly engaged in, and most detrimental to the interests of the country, may be tolerated and supported. During the discussions there was no opportunity of objecting either in parliament or out: Ministers were left uninterruptedly to terminate the negotiations, and we knew only that they were terminated by the recall of our Ambassador, and the dreadful notes of preparation for war.

Let England look into herself, examine strictly her own conduct; let not passion or prejudice blind her to her errors, and seduce her to her ruin; let her check that personal animosity, that spirit of rancour growing up among the rulers, and likely to spread over the mass of the two nations, which must prove the extermination of one, or destruction of both. That no opportunity may be passed by, or occasion lost, through pride, vain glory, or suspicion, of accommodating the differences, and burying the errors of both parties in oblivion, it may not yet be too late.

In the mean time, we must recollect we are fatally involved in a state of actual war, and must fight—must fight or be destroyed: let us then equally be prepared for parley and for combat. We have exasperated a fierce and enterprising foe: much vigilance and exertion will therefore be necessary; and I trust there is no one in these kingdoms, whatever his sentiments may be about the cause, but would be ready to sacrifice his fortune and his life, rather than let this country become a prey to that slavery and oppression, which will inevitably ensue upon the success of the formidable invasion we are threatened with.

THE END.



The question, Why do we go to war? :  
temperately discuused, according to  
the official correspondence.